FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE   **January 19, 2005**

V CORPS CAVALRY UNIT ROOTS OUT INSURGENTS, WEAPONS CACHES IN CONCERT WITH IRAQI TROOPS

By Spc. Joe Alger
1st Infantry Division Public Affairs Office

FORWARD OPERATING BASE MACKENZIE, Iraq — Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 4th U.S. Cavalry of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division, in concert with the 203rd Iraqi Army Battalion, put a major dent in insurgent activity in their area of operations recently with "Operation Powder River."

SPC JOE ALGER

Soldiers from the 1st Squadron, 4th Cavalry of V Corps' 1st Infantry Division and the 203rd Iraqi Army Battalion gather intelligence from a house in the village of Al Montessim as part of Operation Powder River.

The operation was conducted to discover weapons caches and improvised explosive devices hidden in the villages of Ad Duluiyah and Al Montessim and on the island of Hawija.

Staff Sgt. Christopher Massey, the 1/4th Cavalry Tactical Operations Center NCO, said the operation was conducted in two parts. In the first phase, the squadron's

Alpha Troop made a full sweep of Hawija Island. Dismounted patrols searched the island for caches and several target suspects while vehicle checkpoints were set up

around the island to cordon it off. During the operation OH 58-D Kiowa Warrior helicopters kept watch to ensure nobody attempted to cross the river.

Phase two followed the same pattern as the first phase, carried out by the squadron's Bravo Troop in the villages of Ad Duluiyah and Al Montessim.

"We conducted a series of intelligence-driven raids and after that, flooded the zone with Iraqi army and U.S. Soldiers searching for caches," said Capt. Nathan Springer, the squadron personnel officer.

While patrolling the villages during the operation, the Soldiers also had several additional missions.

"Part of the operation is going to different houses throughout the villages and gathering (intelligence)," said Sgt. 1st Class. Charles Nieding, Bravo Troop's Headquarters platoon sergeant. "While we're at each house, we gather information, including their name, tribe, job and grid number. We try to have the (Iraqi army) Soldiers do the majority of the intel gathering. Meanwhile, while they're getting that information, we do a quick walk around the property looking for anything suspicious."

In addition, Nieding said, a medic accompanying the 1/4th Soldiers provides assistance to villagers who are ill.

After searching the houses, the Soldiers comb through the village orchards for weapons caches, a search Nieding said is like trying to find "a needle in a haystack."

Still, Soldiers from B Troop and the 203rd IA Battalion managed to discover one such needle near Al Montessim January 11. The cache contained 23 155mm howitzer rounds, 30 rocket-propelled grenades, 25 grenades, 10 pounds of C4 plastic explosive with blasting caps, fuses, white phosphorus and three AK-47 assault rifles.

"This is a great find," said Staff. Sgt. James Tremblock, a Bravo Troop section sergeant.

"Finding this means less Soldiers will be killed in the long run," Tremblock said.

"This is the first major one we've found since the operation began. We've found a few sporadic things people shouldn't have had, but nothing like this."

Tremblock said the cache, which was discovered with a mine detector and a lot of digging, was found in the last area of interest they were clearing for the operation.

"We've been conducting the operation the last four days and we've covered a lot of ground -- roughly eight kilometers," Tremblock said. He said the Iraqi Soldiers joining them in the operation were a big help and were extremely excited when the cache was uncovered.

Two individuals, one of who was seen fleeing the scene of the cache, were detained for questioning.

The cache was one of 13 discovered by the 1/4th Soldiers over the course of the operation. Many were located only a few hundred meters from main routes, said Springer.

"The weapons in these caches that were discovered would have been easily accessible to anyone who wanted to attack one of our convoys," he added.